



MINUTES

BOARD OF EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS

November 15th, at 2:30pm

Room 301-A, City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street Milwaukee, WI 53202

Present:

Commissioner Jeffery Roman, Chair
Commissioner Tony Snell
Commissioner Mayhoua Moua
Commissioner Sheila Ashley

Absent:

Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Vice-Chair

Jessica Langill, Dept. of Administration
Sharon Robinson, Dept. of Administration
Ben Roovers, City Attorney's Office
Patricia Ruiz-Cantu, Dept. Of Administration
Rebecca Rabatin, ADA Coordinator
Kathy Block, City Attorney's Office
Rhonda Kelsey, City Purchasing
Officer Joshua Post, Milwaukee Police Department
La Keisha Butler, Intergovernmental Relations
Nikki Purvis, Office of Small Business Development

The meeting was called to order at 2:40pm by Commissioner Snell without quorum. Quorum met at 2:55pm.

1. Approval of Minutes from October 18th Meeting

Held until quorum reached. Commissioner Moua moved to approve the October minutes, Commissioner Ashley seconded. Minutes approved unanimously.

2. Ordinance Language Regarding City Contracts (Ben Roovers, Kathy Block and Rhonda Kelsey)

Assistant City Attorney Kathy Block stated that she represents city departments in contracting matters. She stated that in the previous Equal Rights Ordinance there was language applied to

all city contracts that specifically stated that any city contractors were not permitted to discriminate against any city employees based on the list of protected classes. She stated this section had been omitted in the recent ordinance rewrite. Ms. Block stated that this language is important in negotiating contracts. It is helpful for procurement professionals in the city to combat any pushback from contractors in regarding to anti-discrimination language.

Ms. Block stated that it would be relatively easy to add the language back into the ordinance rewrite. Commissioner Snell asked if there had been a lot of pushback from contractors in the past and Ms. Block said that she was not aware of much pushback, but that with the expanding list of protected classes, it may become more relevant and useful in the future. Rhonda Kelsey, City Purchasing Director, stated that she also did not recall any pushback but that since they cite the ordinance in the contracts, it gives the city leverage. Commissioner Ashley asked if this would also give CDBG and HACM leverage in their contracts, and Rhonda Kelsey stated she was not entirely sure, but that she thought that it would.

Ben Roovers stated an additional section could be added to the Employment section in the new Ordinance and could be written verbatim from the previous ordinance with the new protected classes added. Commissioner Snell asked if similar language could be added regarding licensing. Ben Roovers stated he would need to look into that request and would follow up at a later time.

Commissioner Ashley moved to amend the Equal Rights Ordinance to include the anti-discrimination language regarding to city contracts from the previous ordinance, Commissioner Snell seconded. Adoption voted on unanimously. Kathy Block stated that currently city contracts are citing an outdated version of the ordinance and do not recognize all the additional new protected classes. She stated that the next full council meeting is November 28th. She asked if the Commission wanted to bring it to an Alder on their own or if the Commission would like one of the City Attorneys to handle it. She stated that it would be preferable to amend all the city contracts at once, so it would be helpful to get this done as soon as possible. Sharon Robinson delegated this responsibility to Kathy Block and Rhonda Kelsey.

3. Disparity Study

Rhonda Kelsey stated that she was available to answer any questions the Commission may have about the Disparity Study that was approved by Common Council and allocated 1 million dollars to be completed. Ms. Kelsey stated that the previous Disparity Study was challenged and could not be used. She stated the city of Milwaukee was sued by the Hispanic Chamber on the basis of a flawed study with goals that were not advantageous to the Hispanic community. Commissioner Snell asked what could be done differently this time to make sure it would not be challenged. Ms. Kelsey stated that she did not believe there is anything the city could do to completely protect itself from being sued. She stated that DOA would be sure the RFP and BID language would be extremely clear this time around. She stated an evaluation committee will be put together to look at BIDs.

Sharon Robinson stated that she would be asking the City Attorney's Office to have a more elevated role in the process this time around. Ms. Kelsey added that she would like to see more communication about the process be brought to a formal body so that there is more visibility. Nikki Purvis, Director of the Office of Small Business Development, stated that while it may look like there is a gender disparity in the city regarding who gets city contracts, it also comes down to availability of women-owned contracts. She also stated that this study could potentially show that there is not a disparity and that the Common Council could potentially disregard the recommendations that come out of the study if a disparity is found. Ms. Robinson stated that it takes a year and a half to two years to complete the study and that the study should include a larger sample of contracts this time around.

Commissioner Ashley stated that HACM and RACM should be included in this Disparity Study. Ms. Kelsey stated that there would be a discussion on who should be included in this study and that more voices will definitely be included (such as DCD).

Ms. Kelsey stated that depending on the allocation of funding, they should start working on the RFP at the end of December or beginning of January. She stated a solid RFP could potentially be ready by the end of 2018. Commissioner Snell asked if there was anything the ERC could do to help. Ms. Kelsey stated she could use the ERC as a way to communicate information about the process and to get community participation. She stated a member of the ERC could also sit on the evaluation committee.

4. New LGBTQ+ Police Liaison Introduction (Officer Joshua Post)

Commissioner Snell stated that LGBTQ Liaisons were appointed in the MPD in response to the HRC Municipality Index Report. He also stated that it was very important for the LGBTQ community to have a Police Officer that can humanize the force as a liaison. Officer Joshua Post stated that he has been with the MPD for eleven years and is currently assigned to the Captain's car and is the nuisance officer for District One. Officer Post stated that he is aware that trust in the police force is low and that it can be exacerbated by being a part of a community that feels as though their rights are not respected. He also acknowledged the fact that there are many transgender community members who do not feel comfortable reporting crimes because of how they believe they will be treated by Police Officers. He stated he is looking forward to building relationships with this community, so they feel comfortable coming to him. Officer Post stated his direct report is Captain Heather Wurth (the other LGBTQ Liaison).

Commissioner Ashley asked if Officer Post works with the Latino Police Association. He stated he is not an official member but that he volunteers with them. She asked if there is a group similar to LPA for LGBTQ Police Officers. Officer Post stated there is not currently a group like this but that he would like to start a group in the future. He stated that there should at least be a LGBTQ liaison in the Police Officer Support Team. He also stated that in his current role with the MPD he will have the time to really do some good work in his liaison position.

5. Intergovernmental Relations (La Keisha Butler)

LaKeisha Butler stated that Jessica Langill had asked her to come to the ERC meeting to discuss ways to engage the Commission in the Legislative process. She stated that the Intergovernmental Relations division lobbies at the local and state level for initiatives and bills that they do/do not want to become law. She stated a lot of what she does is damage control, but that they try to proactively work on legislation as well. Any positions taken by Intergovernmental Relations is directed by Common Council. At the beginning of the year IRD reaches out to city departments to see what legislation they are interested in and then they put together a Leg Package.

Ms. Butler stated that IRD could forward the Leg Package and bill co-sponsorship memos to Jessica Langill to ask for input. She stated that the ERC's input on bills will not always go to Common Council or that if they do go to Common Council that they will take the same position as the ERC. Commissioner Roman asked if IRD does any federal lobbying. Ms. Butler stated that the budget is small so federal lobbying is very limited. She also stated that another IRD employee, Danielle Decker, has many connections at the federal level that they try to leverage when necessary. She also stated that the city IRD works with the Milwaukee County lobbyists as well. Sharon Robinson stated that key departments in the city also belong to advocacy organizations that do national lobbying.

Commissioner Snell asked if IRD has taken a formal position on transgender and gender identity issues at a state level. Ms. Butler stated she did not think it was in the Leg Package. She also stated that in this political climate, most bills introduced by Democrats will sit. Commissioner Roman asked what process is used in involving the community in creating the city Leg Package. Ms. Butler stated that she was not aware of a way for community to be involved, but that city departments may involve community when choosing their priorities. She stated the Leg Package is also presented in public at the Jud Leg meeting and then the full Common Council meeting at the beginning of the year.

Ms. Butler stated they are working on bringing legislators from Madison to see how Milwaukee really is and to humanize it so they are more willing to work toward addressing needs in Milwaukee.

6. Office of African American Affairs (Sharon Robinson)

Sharon Robinson stated she has been working with Alderman Rainey and Nicole Brookshire (county OAAA Director) on drafting an MOU. She stated the designated space on Fond du Lac Ave needs some work to become operational but will end up being a great facility. She stated the vision of the OAAA will be a "one stop shop" where residents can go and get all the resources and services they need. She stated there are 20 offices along with space for training and large meetings. She also stated the Fatherhood Initiative will be permanently housed in the OAAA. Several organizations and departments will have a presence in the office such as health

screenings, employment resources/materials, youth services, etc. They will also have a workforce development component. Commissioner Ashley suggested writing a grant to finance the labor.

Director Robinson stated that it would be a good idea to have Jessica Langill or one of the ERC Commissioners have a regular presence in the building to offer discrimination complaint services. She did state that Alderman Rainey is very passionate about keeping the space and outreach focused on the population the OAAA is targeting. Director Robinson said this would be a great way to raise the visibility of the ERC on that side of town.

Director Robinson said DPW will be starting in 2018 to update the building and make sure it's ADA compliant. She stated that they hope to open doors in late 2018. Commissioner Roman asked about the structure/management of the office. Director Robinson stated the county OAAA would be willing to have their production manager work out of the Fond du Lac office. She also stated that there could be some part time or graduate positions to staff the front desk. Director Robinson stated that DOA will have a key role in getting the MOU finished and working to make the space operational.

7. Accessible Bike Share Task Force

Rebecca Rabatin (ADA Coordinator) stated that the city's Bike Pedestrian Coordinator had asked to be put on the ERC agenda. She stated that after the listening session in August that the city was looking at putting together a study group to look into the feasibility of having adaptive bikes as part of Milwaukee's bike share program. She stated that before the committee was formed to do so, the city received a grievance regarding not having accessible bikes.

Ms. Rabatin stated that the Bike Pedestrian Coordinator thought that it may make sense for the ERC to put together the accessible bike task force. He also stated that he was hoping the ERC would be able to help get community input for the Bike Pedestrian study being put together. Commissioner Snell asked if IndependenceFirst would be willing to put the task force together and Ms. Rabatin stated that DPW did not want an advocacy group to sponsor the group but that it would be better for a city department/commission to handle it.

Commissioner Snell asked if the individuals who submitted the grievance would be able to come to the next ERC meeting to discuss their concerns and ideas. He also asked the Bike Pedestrian Coordinator to attend the next meeting as well. Director Robinson stated that the Bike Share program is funded by a federal grant that has very specific requirements. She also stated that they are pretty certain they are not breaking any ADA rules/regulations but that they are still willing to look into having a separate accessible bike program. Commissioner Ashley asked if there was a way to get a copy of Wauwatosa's adaptive bike program. She also stated that she is involved with the Milwaukee county AARP group that has been discussing adaptive bikes. Commissioner Snell stated he would also like to see Wauwatosa's numbers on how much their adaptive bikes are being used.

8. Equality Awards & Human Rights Day Event

Jessica Langill stated that the Human Rights Day Event is in the process of being planned through a partnership with the county. There will be many speakers including the Mayor Barrett, Executive Abele, the Police Liaisons, Paul Vornholt, etc. She also stated that the main thing that needs to still be figured out is entertainment. She stated at this point she has only been able to find one performer, a Korean drummer. Ms. Langill requested that the Commissioners think about other performer possibilities.

Ms. Langill also asked the Commissioners to attend the event and Commissioner Snell suggested that throughout the day the Commissioners could feature different initiatives we have taken part of throughout 2017 (Ordinance rewrite, HRC Index score, listening sessions, etc.).

Ms. Langill stated that there will only be room in the rotunda for 8-10 resource tables because of the Christmas tree and the Menorah. She said she has connected organizations that have similar target populations and asked them to share tables to make the most of the space available.

Ms. Langill stated that the Commission needed to choose who would be receiving the three Equality Awards. Commissioner Ashley moved to allow the Human Rights Day Subcommittee to make the final decision on award recipients and Commissioner Roman seconded the motion. Ben Roovers (Assistant City Attorney) stated that the meeting would have to be noticed and open to the public. Ms. Langill stated she would reserve a room at city hall and have a call-in option.

9. ERC Officer Nominations

Commissioner Roman stated that he is calling for chair nominations and that he will be stepping down after his term ends in February. He stated that he felt it was time for new leadership. It was decided that nominations would be discussed and voted on at the January meeting. Ms. Langill reminded the Commission had 4 open seats.

10. Community Dialogue & Upcoming Events

Jessica Langill mentioned the Transgender Day of Remembrance event being held by FORGE at the LGBT Community Center on November 18 at 6:00pm.

11. Next Meeting Date: December 20, 2017 at 2:30pm

12. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

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